

COVID-19 MESSAGE FROM ISC BC REGION

UPDATE #22 / April 16, 2020

Good afternoon,

Thanks to everyone who participated in the ISC BC Region Town Hall Webinar this morning hosted by the First Nations Public Service Secretariat (FNPSS). A special thanks to Richard Jock, Interim Chief Executive Officer, and Katie Hughes, Executive Director, Mental Health and Wellness of the First Nations Health Authority for their participation and handling of health-related questions. A shout out as well to Celina Dorame of the FNPSS for moderating the session.

This Webinar was a follow up to the one held on April 3rd in an effort to reach those of you unable to attend due to a technical glitch. It was a valuable opportunity for us to hear directly from you so we can better understand the top-of-mind issues in your communities. This way, we can focus our efforts on your priorities.

For your reference, a recording of the full webinar will soon be available on the [FNPSS website](#).

UPDATES

In this update we would like to answer a few of the questions from the many topics covered during today's Webinar. We'll revisit all of them in the course of future updates, but today we wanted to focus on responding to your questions about elections, funding eligibility, rental relief, and off-reserve supports.

Are the election amendments available to First Nations with Custom Election Codes?

Yes. The regulations that were passed apply to *Indian Act*, *First Nations Election Act* and Custom Election Codes. First Nations with their own custom codes are advised to look to their own code for direction first and foremost and if their Custom Election Code does not provide for postponement of election in the current exceptional circumstances, the Regulations can serve as a guide.

As noted in an earlier update, new Regulations for Chiefs and Councils have been developed to assist in addressing any governance gap issues that may otherwise have been forthcoming. The regulations provide for an initial extension of the term of office for a maximum of six months after the date the term of office would have normally ended.

With regards to the Indigenous Community Support Fund, is there a difference in funding eligibility for block funded or non-block funded First Nations?

The funds are equally accessible to all First Nations in British Columbia.

The distinctions-based \$305 million Indigenous Community Support Fund was announced in late March to address immediate needs in First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nation communities related to COVID-19.

The Indigenous Community Support Fund includes \$215 million for First Nations including \$39.6 million for First Nations in British Columbia.

In general, the amount provided to each community takes into account a base amount of \$50,000 per community, the total population residing in community (based on 2016 Census population), and will be adjusted for remoteness and Community Wellbeing Index scores.

Is the \$500 rental supplement available on reserve for subsidized housing units?

We promised to get back to this participant after we looked into the eligibility criteria. The BC Temporary Rental Supplement Program (BC-TRS) is run through the Province of British Columbia, specifically BC Housing.

The good news is yes. For those living in a First Nations community; if you pay monthly rent for your primary residence and meet all other eligibility criteria, you and your landlord can apply for the BC-TRS. For more information please see: bchousing.org/BCTRS.

What supports are available for members living off reserve?

First Nations individuals living on or off reserve have access to all other measures provided through the Government of Canada's **COVID-19 Economic Response Plan**, including support to workers and businesses. These supports are in addition the funding provided directly to First Nation communities and include:

- the Canada Emergency Response Benefit,
- Increased Canada Child Benefit,
- The special Goods and Services Tax credit payment.

We are also working on info sheets that highlight core supports (federally and provincially). We hope to have the first one available soon and will continue to provide information as well as program and funding details as they become available.

We look forward to our next Town Hall Webinar.

Support for Business

Tourism and hospitality is one of the most important business sectors supporting Indigenous economic development in BC and measures to contain COVID-19 have resulted in a severe blow to the industry and to the economic sustainability of many communities across the Province. The Government of Canada is working with the other federal departments and the Province to review options to support Indigenous businesses, including tourism businesses, to ensure that they are also getting crucial support at this time. Today, the Prime Minister announced **additional supports for small businesses**.

It includes expanding the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) to businesses that paid between \$20,000 and \$1.5 million in total payroll in 2019.

Additionally, the Government of Canada intends to introduce the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (CECRA) for small businesses. The program will seek to provide loans, including forgivable loans, to commercial property owners who in turn will lower or forgo the rent of small businesses for the months of April (retroactive), May, and June. (Implementation of the program will require a partnership between the federal government and provincial and territorial governments, which are responsible for property owner-tenant relationships.)

Mental Health Supports

In yesterday's update we mentioned mental health supports available through the First Nations Health Authority specifically, the KUU-US Crisis Response Services at 1-800-588-8717 (or 250-723-2040 for child and youth / 250-723-4050 for adult and Elders).

Recently, the Government of Canada announced a new web portal and app offering mental health resources for anyone needing support during these challenging times. The new portal is called **Wellness Together Canada**. It offers online resources, tools, apps, and connections to trained volunteers and qualified mental health professionals when needed.

PARTNER INFORMATION

The Province of British Columbia announced new measures today to provide new tools to ease the burden to business impacted by COVID-19 while looking to the recovery ahead.

- **New COVID-19 supports for businesses, local governments**

NATIONAL INFORMATION

The Government of Canada has made announcements regarding financial assistance for those who will be impacted during these unprecedented times – these individuals and business are encouraged to apply for assistance. You can find further information on how to apply for financial or economic support at:

Canada.ca/coronavirus and [Questions and Answers on the Canada Emergency Response Benefit](#).

- For a great description of what flattening the curve means, consider watching [Prime Minister Trudeau's video tweet](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada](#)
- [Resources for Canadian Businesses](#)
- [Transport Canada – COVID-19 measures, updates, and guidance issued by Transport Canada](#)

USEFUL LINKS

- [Indigenous Community Support Fund: Urban and off-reserve Indigenous organizations and communities](#)
- [Family Violence Prevention Program](#)
- [First Nations Public Service Secretariat](#)
- [First Nations Health Authority](#)
Summary of COVID-19 information and response.
- [COVID-19 BC Support App and Self-Assessment Tool](#)
The app will let you receive the latest updates, trusted resources, and alerts. The Self-Assessment Tool is built in.

REGIONAL CONTACTS

We've set up a dedicated email for any non-health COVID-19-related questions and requests:
aadnc.iscbccovid19.aandc@canada.ca

The email address and other information are also available on the [FNPSS website](#).